



A Celebration of Highlife

On January 4th 2001 the compact disc [Ghana Popular Music 1931-1957](#) was officially launched at the W.E.B. DuBois Centre for Pan-African Studies at Accra in cooperation with the Swiss embassy and the [Bokoore African Popular Music Archives Foundation](#) (directed by [Prof. Dr. John Collins](#)). Copies of the disc were distributed to the Ghanaian media, especially to the radio stations. Furthermore digital copies of all 113 UTC-recordings digitised so far were transferred to various sound archives where they are now accessible to the Ghanaian public. These are:

The International Centre for African Music and Dance (Prof. Nketia)
The African Studies Music Archives, Legon
The School of Performing Arts of the University of Ghana, Legon
The Department of Music of the University of Ghana, Legon
The African Heritage Library (Kofi Ghanaba)
The G.B.C. Archives, Accra
The Bokoore African Popular Music Archives Foundation, Accra
The Music Department of the University of Cape Coast (Prof. Dr. Nicholas Kofi)

The event which was chaired by MC Paa Kwesi Holdbrook-Smith saw the performance of various musical groups with a specific connection to the UTC-recordings.

[Presbyterian Church Choir](#) (directed by: Dr. Missionu Amu)
[Local Dimension Palmwine Highlife Band](#) (based at the University of Ghana, Legon)
[G.B.C. Highlife Dance Band](#)
[Kwabena Nyama and Band](#) (New Asonomaso, AS)
[F. Kenia Guitar Band](#)

In his welcome address His Excellency Dr. Peter A. Schweizer, the Swiss ambassador, stressed the longlasting ties between his country and Ghana. He set the UTC recording activity within the context of the Work of the Basel Mission (now mission21) in which the Basel (Mission) Trading Company had its origins.

The producers Serena Dankwa and Veit Arlt awarded letters of appreciation and copies of their compact disc Ghana Popular Music to some musicians or their descendants who could be traced. Among these were Mrs. Missionu Amu, Eddie Bruce, Tommy Gripman, Dan Tackie, Oscar More Ofori and others.

Just when the program was about to start a power failure occurred which affected the whole of the area. Luckily this was not much of a problem for the Abeka Presbyterian Church Choir performing acapella under the direction of Dr. Missionu Amu.



76 year old [Kwabena Nyama](#) is one of the musicians who in 1954 was recorded by the Union Trading Company of Basel, for example the song [Sunkwa](#). With his band he performed songs from his latest release [Sunday Monday](#).



The university based Local Dimension Palmwine Highlife Band presented a new and interesting version of palmwine music composed by [Aaron Bebe Sukura](#).

The old maestro of guitar band highlife F. Kenia is here backed up by Dela (on the flute) from the School of Performing Arts, Legon.



Among the crowd were Prof. John Hagan (head of the National Commission on Culture), his predecessor Nana Akuoko Sarpong and Prof. Kwabena Nketia.